



NEWS RELEASE

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Hearing Set for Small Business Owners to Comment About Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

Fargo, ND – Small business owners, community leaders and representatives of trade associations concerned about excessive enforcement of federal rules can voice their complaints at a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in Fargo on Tuesday, June 28, 2005, from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

The hearing will be held at the NDSU Research & Technology Park, 1735 NDSU Research Park Drive, Room 148.

Peter Sorum, Senior Advisor to the SBA National Ombudsman, members of SBA's Region VIII Regulatory Fairness Board, and representatives of federal regulatory agencies will hear comments and complaints about regulatory enforcement and compliance.

"One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies," SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera said. "Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations," he added, "and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

This forum offers small business owners a chance to express their concerns about federal compliance practices in SBA's North Dakota District area.

Comments and complaints presented during the hearing will be directed to the appropriate federal regulatory agency. This information will also be shared with federal officials in the Ombudsman's annual report to Congress, and with managers of federal regulatory agencies to assist them with their enforcement actions.

The National Ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts, regulations in general, or securing guaranteed loans.

The Fargo hearing is open to the public. Those wishing to testify should contact Nadine Phillips at (701) 239-5131 ext. 208, or by email at nadine.phillips@sba.gov before the hearing. Should a small business owner or representative be unable to attend, written testimony may be sent in advance of the hearing to be included in the public record.

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Comments and concerns about federal enforcement actions can be addressed directly to SBA's Office of the National Ombudsman at 1-888-734-3247 (REGFAIR). For more information about the national ombudsman and this hearing, you may visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

For information on SBA's programs and services in North Dakota, call the North Dakota District Office at (701) 239-5131. You may also visit the North Dakota District Office Web site at www.sba.gov/nd/.

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The SBA helps small businesses each year with access to capital and credit through its financial assistance program, as well as providing technical training and business start up and expansion counseling, disaster loans for businesses and homeowners, and federal contracting and procurement assistance. For more information about the SBA go to www.sba.gov or call the SBA's Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA, or TDD 704-344-6640 for the hearing impaired.